

Patient controlled analgesia (PCA) for children

Information for patients, parents and guardians

You have been told that your child can use patient controlled analgesia (PCA).

Your child will be cared for by experienced ward nurses and supported by our pain service team. The pain service team is made up of anaesthetists and nurses who work together to make sure that each child has the best pain relief available. Anaesthetists are the doctors who look after your child when they are asleep during an operation and care for the pain relief afterwards.

We hope this factsheet will help to answer some of your questions about pain relief using PCA.

What is patient controlled analgesia (PCA)?

PCA uses a computerised pump with a button for your child to press when they need pain relief. When the button is pressed, the pump releases analgesia (pain-relieving medicine) directly into your child's drip. We often use the strong pain-relieving medicine morphine for PCA. Once the button is pressed, it takes up to 15 minutes for the medicine to be fully effective. Your child should start to feel some effect within the first 5 minutes. This is quicker than if they took the medicine by mouth.

We use PCA because it allows the patient to control their own pain relief. Research has shown that the person who is feeling the pain will know best when they need pain-relieving medicine. PCA allows your child to do this safely. We only offer PCA to children who are able to understand the technique, are willing to use it and are physically able to press the button.

Your child will be taught how to use PCA to help reduce their pain, especially before moving or physiotherapy. Only your child will be allowed to press the button on the handset.

We may also give your child other pain-relieving medicine while they are using PCA.

Is PCA safe?

Yes, PCA is safe. The pump has special safety features which will be explained to you by your nurse or anaesthetist. Your child will be closely monitored by the nursing staff while they are using PCA.

To make sure that PCA is safe, your child must be the only person to press the button on the handset.

Side effects

The pain-relieving medicine can cause some side effects, including:

- sleepiness
- feeling or being sick
- itching
- difficulty in passing urine

Encourage your child to tell the nurse if any of these happen.

Stopping PCA

Throughout your child's PCA treatment, we will check that the pain relief is working. Each child feels pain differently, so your nurse, doctor or anaesthetist will talk with you and your child about the best time to stop PCA. Our aim is to make your child comfortable. When the PCA stops your child may require further doses of morphine by mouth. We will also give them other pain-relieving medicines, such as Paracetamol, during and after their PCA treatment.

Useful information

If you have any questions, please ask your nurse or contact our paediatric pain service on telephone: 023 8120 5134 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm)

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Pain/Pages/Whichpainkiller.aspx

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/morphine-pain

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone **023 8120 4688** for help.

www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital